

COLUMBIA RIVER REGIONAL FORUM

TECHNICAL MANAGEMENT TEAM

October 8th, 2008 Conference Call

FACILITATOR'S SUMMARY NOTES ON FUTURE ACTIONS

Facilitator: Robin Gumpert

Notes: Erin Halton

The following notes are a summary of issues that are intended to point out future actions or issues that may need further discussion at upcoming meetings. These notes are not intended to be the "record" of the meeting, only a reminder for TMT members.

Autumn Treaty Fishing SOR

Kyle Dittmer, CRITFC, referred TMT to an Autumn Treaty Fishing SOR posted as a link to the TMT agenda. The SOR covered the period 10/7 to 10/10, requesting a 1' band constraint at Bonneville, The Dalles and John Day. Dittmer reported 466 nets in the 6 pools of the zone, and anticipates this being the final week of fishing planned for this year. The COE responded that as in the past they will provide a 1.5' hard (75' – 76.5')/ 1.0' (75.5-76.5') soft constraint at the Bonneville pool and a 1.5' soft (158.5-160') constraint at The Dalles, with emphasis on daytime hours. At John Day the COE will provide an elevation range from 262.5-265'.

Action/Next Steps: Dittmer will prepare a summary of 2008 Autumn Treaty fishing for the 10/22 TMT meeting.

Albeni Falls Operations – USFWS/IDFG SOR #2008-1

Russ Kiefer, ID, presented on USFWS/IDFG SOR 2008-1, posted as a link to the TMT agenda. The request to the Action Agencies is for a Lake Pend Oreille draw down to elevation 2051' by no later than 11/15, without exceeding TDG standards at Albeni Falls or any downstream projects. The SOR specifies that most of the drawdown to elevation 2051' be achieved by 11/8 if possible, as kokanee spawning has commenced earlier the last two years than in previous years. Kiefer noted that there are a few unique conditions that shaped the request for this year, including adult kokanee abundance and timing, and the constraints associated with the spill wall construction at The Dalles. The SOR also specified if kokanee spawning is in progress prior to November 15th and occurs in locations and depths that are deemed vulnerable to continued drawdown, then the Corps of Engineers shall, within 5 days of notification, complete drawdown activities even if 2051' has not been reached. The COE suggested that this year's request will require an aggressive draw down earlier than previously planned for in the Water Management Plan, to allow flexibility for water conditions to unfold over the season and still meet the 2051' elevation target. They also noted some of the specifics around the operation had been left open-ended. Kiefer acknowledged this, highlighting the challenge in anticipating precipitation and flow conditions that are yet to come. He suggested that with IDFG performing daily spawning surveys, coordination with the Action Agencies would occur as soon as spawning is observed. This would support the best possible planning for meeting the multiple needs of the system. Kiefer thanked all who were involved with the development of the SOR. The following parties weighed in on the request:

- NOAA: no objection
- BPA: no objection
- COE: no objection
- BOR: no objection
- WA: no objection
- MT: no objection
- CRITFC: no objection

Action/Next Steps: The COE will operate to achieve elevation 2051' by no later than 11/15. In order to do this, the Seattle District COE will request a deviation from Water Control Manual (WCM) guidance that says the lake shall be no lower than an elevation of 2054' by the end of October as well as a deviation from WCM guidance that says the lake shall not reach elevation 2051' until 11/15. The COE will coordinate with IDFG and USFWS on spawning and operational updates as we move ahead, and TMT will discuss this item at their next meeting, scheduled for 10/22.

The Dalles Spillwall Update

The COE provided a brief update to TMT regarding construction work on The Dalles spillwall. The barges had been mobilized to the area, and after checking again with the contractor, it was determined that there will be no operational flexibility at this point around the Bonneville forebay range of 75' – 76.5 feet that had been discussed at the last TMT meeting. Tony Norris, BPA, also reported that the chum monitoring plan would be similar to the previous year, about three days a week, and would include counts and redd GPS tracking.

Action/Next Steps: BPA will provide more details on the chum monitoring plan for this year at the 10/22 meeting. Discussions at TMT will be ongoing throughout the chum spawning season.

10/22 Face to Face Meeting

Agenda items include:

- 2008 Autumn Treaty Fishing Review
- Albeni Falls Operations
- The Dalles Spill Wall Update
- Operations Review

**Columbia River Regional Forum
Technical Management Team Conference Call
Oct. 8, 2008**

1. Introduction

Today's TMT call was chaired by Cathy Hlebechuk (COE) and facilitated by Robin Gumpert (DS Consulting) with representatives of COE, NOAA, BPA, BOR, FPC, Washington, Idaho and others participating. The following is a summary (not a verbatim transcript) of the topics discussed and decisions made at the meeting. Anyone with questions or comments about these notes should provide them to the TMT chair or bring them to the next meeting.

2. Autumn Treaty Fishing – SOR 2008-C11

Kyle Dittmer (CRITFC) presented SOR 2008-C11 which requests the standard 1-foot elevation bands for Bonneville, The Dalles and John Day pools. CRITFC's net flights of the area found 466 nets, 157 of those in the Bonneville pool, 105 at The Dalles, and 204 at John Day.

For the fishery, the COE will operate Bonneville pool at 75-76.5 feet elevation as a hard constraint and 75-.5-76.5 as a soft constraint. The Dalles pool will be held at 158.5-160 feet as a soft constraint, and John Day from 262.5-265 feet. The latest tribal fish forecast is the same as last week, 210,000 adult Chinook and 315,000 adult steelhead at Bonneville. The tribal catch turned out to be undervalued, so the tribes can catch more fish. They plan to do so Oct. 7-10.

3. Albeni Falls Operations – SOR USFWS/IDFG 2008-1

Russ Kiefer (Idaho) presented this SOR to TMT which includes a Lake Pend Oreille lake level decision tree. The purpose of the decision tree is to balance power production needs with the needs of fish in Lake Pend Oreille.

The decision tree results in a recommendation based on the following considerations. First is the weather. NOAA and the Weather Service's forecasts of precipitation in the Columbia basin predict an equal chance of precipitation being either above or below normal. The second consideration is that adult kokanee abundance is low, and research indicates that the available gravel will be adequate this year for adult female spawning. The outlook is good for a strong adult kokanee population next year. A third consideration is that the lake level was at 2055 feet last winter, and wave action associated with dropping the lake level to 2051 will help to clean the gravel beds to keep them optimal for spawning. These are the conditions that provide good egg-to-fry survival, studies show. Fourth, chum spawning success in the lower Columbia last year was considered adequate. In addition to these four factors that are evaluated in the decision tree, an important consideration is that kokanee appear to be spawning

early this year, due to large body size (research indicates that larger fish spawn earlier) and spawning timing over the past two years.

The SOR requests a drawdown of Lake Pend Oreille to elevation 2,051 feet by Nov. 15. It aims to minimize or eliminate the need for spill at Albeni Falls and Box Canyon which tends to create TDG problems downstream. IDFG and USFWS will monitor Lake Pend Oreille for kokanee spawning activity and notify the Action Agencies if spawning appears to be occurring early. At that point, the Action Agencies would have up to five days to complete the pool drawdown, even if the lake level doesn't reach elevation 2,051 feet.

The SOR is intentionally nebulous, Kiefer explained, because rather than try to anticipate every possible scenario that could develop, USFWS and IDFG agreed to wait and see how much system flexibility BPA actually needs in light of the spill wall construction that is now happening at The Dalles Dam. There is concern about dropping Lake Pend Oreille to a level that would spread gravel out and negatively impact egg-to-fry survival. If fish are spawning deep, the Action Agencies would be encouraged to speed up the draft. In the case of an emergency, they could be requested to make changes within 24 hours.

Hlebechuk asked whether it would be a problem if the lake reaches elevation 2,051 feet by Nov. 1. Earlier than Nov. 15 would be fine, Kiefer said. The COE is currently drafting Albeni Falls and will make a deviation request from a restriction in the water control manual that the pool elevation must be no lower than 2,054 feet on Oct. 31, and 2,051 feet on Nov. 15.

The kokanee population in Lake Pend Oreille is currently threatened by lake trout and rainbow trout. Research shows that when kokanee populations decline, lake trout tend to predominate over listed bull trout, an undesirable result. Construction of The Dalles spill wall will constrain the Action Agencies' ability to change the elevation of Bonneville pool. The result will be less flexibility to meet both regional power needs and the needs of chum spawning below Bonneville Dam.

NOAA, Washington, CRITFC, BPA, Montana, COE and BOR raised no objections to implementing this SOR as written. TMT will check in on kokanee spawning at its next meeting Oct. 22 during the operations review. A second SOR for kokanee spawning will be presented to TMT in early December regarding the incubation level.

4. The Dalles Spill Wall Construction Update

Both of the contractor's barges have been mobilized, but they haven't started moving the pre-cast units yet, Hlebechuk reported. The Bonneville forebay is operating at elevation 75-76.5 feet. The contractor won't know how much operating flexibility he has until additional equipment is brought onsite.

The Dalles tailwater was kept at elevation 77 feet while the largest barge (300 tons) was being moved into place, Hlebechuk said. The contractor will also need that elevation while the pre-cast units are being moved across the rock shelf into the stilling basin.

5. Chum Monitoring

BPA is checking into the salvage operation, an issue TMT hasn't dealt with in a while, Norris said. Salvage means getting adults back to the hatchery. BPA will provide more detail on the chum redd monitoring plan at the next TMT meeting Oct. 22. Cindy LeFleur (Washington) provided some detail: Surveyors will comb the area around Ives Island 1-2 days a week for live and dead fish, as well as redds. Other chum spawning areas will be monitored throughout the rest of the week. The big unknown this year, Norris said, will be the impact of spill wall construction on the ability to do surveys.

5. Next Meeting

The next regularly scheduled TMT meeting will be Oct. 22, 2008. A review of autumn treaty fishing, updates on the Albeni Falls operation and The Dalles spill wall construction, follow-up details on the chum monitoring plan, and initiation of spawning at Vernita Bar will be on the agenda. This summary prepared by consultant and writer Pat Vivian.

Name	Affiliation
Cathy Hlebechuk	COE
Paul Wagner	NOAA
Tony Norris	BPA
John Roache	BOR
Cindy LeFleur	Washington
Margaret Filardo	FPC
Russ George	WMC
Ruth Burris	PGE
Ken Brettmann	COE Seattle
Jim Litchfield	Montana
Dave Benner	FPC
Richelle Beck	DRA
Shane Scott	PPC
Russ Holder	USFWS Spokane
Mark Miller	USFWS Spokane
Kevin Grode	COE
Kyle Dittmer	CRITFC
Russ Kiefer	Idaho
Barry Espensen	CBB